

Reporters provide inspired version of California's story

PERSONAL

California, Inc. by Joel Kotkin and Paul Grabowicz (Rawson, Wade: \$11.95).

Reviewed by Carolyn See
Special to the Tribune

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If you consider California as a country, it is the eighth wealthiest in the world. And this is in spite of depression, inflation, bad times, whatever. This is just one of many strange and wonderful facts that two brilliant, original, moderately wacky journalists, Eastbay TODAY/Oakland Tribune reporter Paul Grabowicz and former Washington Post reporter Joel Kotkin, have turned up about our territory.

"California, Inc." bristles with such facts; things we knew and things we didn't: To consider that Rep. Robert Dornan is the nephew of Jack Haley puts a rosy cast on the both of them. Or consider that Mike Curb, Lt. Gov., was in 1967 "involved in the movie 'Mondo Hollywood' — a

MORE BOOKS

- Children's writer Peter Spier got started on his illustrious career by drawing goats. D-8.
- Veteran South African author Nadine Gordimer has published her latest 'night thoughts on apartheid.' D-9
- How women are changing today's Army is examined in 'Mixed Company.' D-6.

raunchy account of the seamier side of the entertainment business. Curb provided the music for the film, which included one scene involving a young woman disrobing in front of another burly, cigar-smoking woman ... Curb has downplayed his role in the movie ... " Well, to consider such facts is quite wonderful, much like discovering packets of dusty love letters tucked in among our grandparent's insurance policies.

In fact, what Kotkin and Grabowicz have wrought is a minor miracle. When, for years, "California history" as such has produced in the popular mind nothing but Franciscans and Indians, swallows and the Gold Rush, these two journalists have looked at our past with fresh eyes — reminding us, for instance, that in addition to our minority "problems" with Japanese, Chinese, blacks, Latinos and Filipinos, we actually imported, in 1907, 10,000 *Indian* Indians to do our dirty work — and married the past to the present in a dozen ingenious ways, so that as you read, lights keep going on: Aha! Amazing! I never thought of it that way!

Like most really good ideas, the authors' are almost embarrassingly simple. The first is that the Gold Rush mentality has metamorphosed into an "entrepreneurial" mind-set — a glorification of free-lance businessmen, a set of ideas that at once rejects the New Deal notion of helping the needy, and wistfully accepts the assumption that every economic gambler has at least a fighting chance at making it big, striking it rich beyond his wildest dreams.

Westward Independence: The second idea grows out of the first — if California is so rich, so lucky in its resources — why should it place itself in a colonial position vis-a-vis the rest of the United States? Instead of looking eastward, toward a federal government saddled with fossil-

See 'CALIFORNIA,' Page D-7

Continued from D-1

ized and moribund industrial cities, why not look to the north, west and south, out and around the countries of the "Pacific rim," take our place with them, more or less independent of the rest of the nation, and act as a nation ourselves?

It's not entirely clear whether Kotkin and Grabowicz themselves endorse these notions. In fact, they seem ambivalent, discussing (reporting?) in a cluster of chapters the pure fun of reaching for the big bucks, taking our place in a world hierarchy, putting our sources of wealth — from agriculture to movies to silicon chips — all together in a fascinating patchwork; and then in the next chapters discussing (reporting?) the devastating effects this entrepreneurial spirit

minorities, which form an increasingly restless, furious underclass, but on the Caucasian middle class, whose continual reaching for the brass ring has had devastating side effects.

The fact that these men are reporters is perhaps the key to this ambivalence. They don't say that Corporate California, enchanted by wealth and rosy visions of the good life, at the expense of at least half our population, is "good" or "bad." No, they put two chapters next to each other, one on Gov. Jerry Brown, one on President Reagan, and simply show, law by law, bill by bill, how excruciatingly similar the two are — rhetoric to the contrary.

They show how the Hollywood movie industry rewards a man like David Begelman and punishes a man like Paul Jarrico, whose lost masterpiece, "Salt of the Earth," was one of the casualties of the entrepreneurial mind-set.

Again, two themes

amounts of scholarship on the past.

(Those who are bemused, for example, about the influence of est and dollar prophets like Leo Sunshine in today's California will shake their heads and sigh over accounts of Albert Powell Warrington's Krotona cult founded in 1911, and William Money, aka "Prof. Money, Dr. Money, Rev. Money, Deacon Money and Bishop Money," who hit L.A. in — get ready — 1841.)

"California, Inc." isn't perfect by any means. The chapter on

entertainment, particularly, has a tired, thrice-read feel about it. But the documentation throughout appears to be sound. The authors have read Carey McWilliams, the Caugheys, John Weaver — all our fine historians — and have fleshed out their findings with a series of extraordinary original interviews with politicians, money men, moguls and frauds. The footnotes here are almost as much fun as the text.

It is optimistic in the extreme to think that any universities or high

schools would pick up "California, Inc." as required reading in their compulsory California history classes. But they should — to quell forever the missions and the Indians, the "mural" concept of our past, and replace it with something more fascinating, repugnant and real.

Carolyn See reviews books regularly for the Los Angeles Times. Her fourth novel, "Rhine Maidens," has just been published. Her fifth, a historical novel set in Los Angeles, is scheduled for release next fall.

trepreneurial mind-set.

Again, two themes "inform" this book — the effects of money on a society and the influence of the past upon the present. Because they are good reporters the authors repeatedly nose out where the money is, and get people who should have never given an interview to talk. And also, because they're good reporters, they've taken the time to do very solid and respectable

TUE APR 25 1989 CC

Tribune reporters, editor win press awards

By Judy Ronningen
The Tribune

RICHMOND — Tribune reporter Alix Christie won two first-place awards from the Contra Costa Press Club for articles on Afghan refugees and on the dramatic rescue of a man pinned in his car after a freeway accident.

Jonathan Marshall, Tribune editorial page editor, also won first place for an editorial criticizing America's war on drugs. The winners were announced during the press club's awards dinner Saturday in Point Rich-

mond.

Tribune reporters swept the spot news category, led by Christie's story about the freeway rescue, written while she was a reporter for The Herald in Dublin. Paul Grabowicz, second place, wrote about a fishing fleet blockade of the Port of Oakland; and C.J. Clemmons and Linda Yoshikawa-Cogley, third place, reported on a helicopter explosion at sea. Yoshikawa-Cogley is now a reporter with The Seattle Times.

Christie won the feature category for her story about Afghan

refugees and their adjustment to life in America. The Tribune's Kevin Fagan came in second with a story about Billy the Kid and his descendants.

Other Tribune winners were Roger Rapoport, second, best series, for "SLA: The Untold Story" and the team of Kathy Zimmerman, Michael Collier and Paul Grabowicz, third, best reporting on an issue, for stories on AC Transit Director Linda Shepard.

Other first-place winners were Contra Costa Times reporters Craig Jarvis, general

news; Rachele Kanigel, reporting on an issue; Denis Cuff and Craig Jarvis, series; and Lynn Carey, column. West County Times sports editor Jay Heater won twice, for sports news feature and sports story, and reporter Mike Hytha won for investigative series.

First-place photo awards went to Thomas Ovalle, Valley Times, for news photo and photo page; Meri Simon, Antioch Ledger/Pittsburg Post Dispatch, color and sports action; and to Susan Pollard, Ledger/Dispatch, for sports feature and feature.

Three Tribune reporters win award

Three Tribune reporters have been honored for their investigation into why the Cypress Structure of the Nimitz Freeway failed in the Oct. 17 earthquake.

Paul Grabowicz, Judy Ronningen and Craig Staats have been awarded the Engineering Communications Award given annually by the Consulting Engineers Association of California.

The series of reports that appeared Oct. 21 through Dec. 1 explored the fatal flaws in the design and construction of the double-decker freeway, which claimed 42 when it collapsed.

The Tribune entry was chosen from among 27 entries. In addition to the stories, special mention was made of accompanying illustrations by Tribune artist Steve Kearsley.

A \$500 cash award and plaque will be presented April 21 in San Diego at the association's annual meeting.

FR | MAR 29 1991

Tribune writers win engineers' award

Oakland Tribune reporters Paul Grabowicz and Carolyn Newbergh won first place for their reports on state geologists and seismic regulations in the fourth annual California Engineering Communications competition.

The newspaper's investigative team received a \$1,000 prize for the June 1990 series titled "Faults in the System," which exposed many dangerous loopholes in California's seismic laws and unscrupulous geologists who provided false reports for accommodating developers.

Grabowicz and Newbergh will be honored at the Consulting Engineers Association conference in Monterey next month.

The award, sponsored by the Consulting Engineers Communication Foundation, was established to enhance public awareness and understanding of the consulting engineering profession.

This is the second year in a row the Oakland Tribune received first place in the competition. In 1990 three reporters won for their series of articles, "The Quake of '89," which focused on the collapse of the Cypress Structure.

TUE APR 23 1991

Tribune reporters win first-place awards

The Oakland Tribune's investigative reporting team, Paul Grabowicz and Carolyn Newbergh, and reporters Kevin Fagan and Jon Rochmis received first-place awards this weekend in the Contra Costa Press Club's writing contest.

Three other writers, Harry Harris, Robert J. Lopez and Henry Schulman, received second-place honors in the annual competition.

Grabowicz and Newbergh received two awards, one for best investigative reporting for articles detailing the relationship between Alameda developer Ron Cowan and Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, and the other for best series, for articles describing how geologists who work for developers often discount earthquake hazards.

Fagan's prize-winning feature recounted his rides with "yuppie hobos" who spend weekends riding the rails. Rochmis was honored for best sports news story for his account of the umpire's controversial ejection of Red Sox pitcher Roger Clemens in the American League playoffs last year.

Harris and Lopez were honored for their team story on Oakland's 1989 record murder rate; Harris also received a general news award for his story on the murder of Oakland drug enforcer Dave "Fat Dave" McKnight. Schulman's sports news honor was for coverage of Game 1 of the A's-Red Sox baseball playoffs.

The awards were presented at the club's dinner in Lafayette.

Tribune writers reap more honors

TUE JUN 18 1991
Reporters for the Oakland Tribune have received top journalism honors for their investigation of seismic hazards and coverage of a deranged gunman's rampage at a Berkeley bar last year.

The awards were given in the 1990 Best of the West competition sponsored by a Phoenix-based journalism foundation. This year's contest drew nearly 1,300 entries from newspapers and television stations in 13 Western states.

Tribune staff writers Paul Grabowicz and Carolyn Newbergh were awarded first place in the growth and development reporting category for their series, "Faults in the System," about shoddy geologic studies and inadequate state safety regulation of developments.

A team of Tribune reporters received second place in the spot news category for a package of stories on the Sept. 27 all-night hostage drama in which two people, including gunman Mehrdad Dashti, were killed at Henry's Bar near the University of California at Berkeley.

The hostage story reporting team included Bill Brand, Kelly Gust, Susan Stern, Paul Grabowicz, Roland De Wolk and Bill Snyder.

Other Bay Area newspaper winners were the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner and Contra Costa Times.

MON SEP 30 1991

COUNTERPOINT

no file

Director has bone to pick on 'hidden government' series

Paul Grabowicz very biased and very critical series on "hidden government" (July 31-Aug. 2) totally ignored the fact that the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board has just forced a new and expensive effluent toxicity testing program upon the West County Agency and thus doubled our budget.

This program, which is being mandated for a number of bay dischargers, will cost approximately \$175,000, as opposed to our entire budget of \$160,646 last year.

Grabowicz also chose to ignore the fact that new state and federal laws are going to mandate even more expenditures in the near future. Past records show, and Grabowicz should have reported in all fairness, that during past times of inactivity our budget has declined dramatically. We obviously do not spend money just to be spending it, but to report all the facts would have destroyed your thesis.

Whatever happened to objective journalism?

Steven Ritchie, executive officer of the regional board, may well have a bone to pick with Grabowicz also. Ritchie was quoted as saying, "I sure can't think of a reason why they should have a separate agency,"

meaning the West County Agency.

Ritchie must have been misled because it is the state board as well as his very agency that urged the creation of an agency such as ours in order to save taxes, prevent duplicate services, and result in less work for his agency to keep track of dischargers.

If Grabowicz has a problem with "hidden government" possibly he should assail the legislators who mandated it.

Journalism of this ilk merits no Pulitzers and serves no purpose except to discourage dedicated citizens from serving in public office, which surely is not a goal of the Oakland Tribune?

WILLIAM S. OLIVER
Chairman of the Board
of Directors
West County Agency
Richmond

Reporter Paul Grabowicz replies: Mr. Oliver is wrong on every point he makes in his letter. He claims that:

■ I "chose to ignore" the argument the WCA must spend more money due to new laws. The story quoted WCA directors John Ziesennehenne and Lonnie Washington Jr. making precisely that point.

I did not report that the WCA

budget had declined during a past period of "inactivity." I stated "the WCA became largely moribund. Its operating budget dwindled to about \$16,200 by 1988."

■ Water board executive officer Steven Ritchie was "misled" and may have "a bone to pick" with me over his quote on whether the WCA is still needed. I have spoken to Mr. Ritchie since the story ran. He said the quote is accurate, he was not misled and has no bone to pick with me.

■ The WCA is needed because it is being "forced" to do new testing by the water board. Ritchie says there is no requirement the WCA be the agency to do those tests.

The real question, which Mr. Oliver doesn't address, is if the testing and other projects can be done more cheaply by local sanitary districts, rather than by a special agency like the WCA.

Finally, Mr. Oliver says questions about "hidden government" like the WCA should be directed to "legislators who mandated it." In two years, the WCA tripled directors' pay and spent \$15,000 on travel, including to conferences in resort cities like Palm Springs. The only people who "mandated" those expenses were Mr. Oliver and his fellow WCA directors.

SAT OCT 19 1991

Oakland Tribune wins reporting awards

The staff of the Oakland Tribune has won first place in the deadline reporting section of the Inland Press Association's public affairs news contest. The award was given for the coverage of the hostage incident at Henry's Bar in Berkeley in Sept. 1990.

Reporters Paul Grabowicz and Carolyn Newbergh took a second place in the investigative section of the same contest for their articles on Assembly Speaker Willie Brown and Alameda developer Ron Cowan.



■ MARTIN SNAPP

FRI DEC 24 1993

MONTAGNA

Exit The Hero: Lost in the hubbub over the departure of Oakland Tribune Editor Pearl Stewart was an even bigger blow to the Trib: last week's resignation of investigative reporter Paul Grabowicz.

This is no knock at Stewart, who is emerging from her one-year stint with her reputation, if anything, enhanced. It's just that Paul is the best reporter I've ever worked with.

If his name isn't as familiar to you as Bill Mann's or Brenda Payton's or even mine, it's probably because columnists get their pictures in the paper and reporters don't. (Let's face it: If you print a chimpanzee's picture every day, eventually people will ask it for its autograph.)

But I'll bet you remember some of his *exposes*: the Oakland school district, the Harbor Bay Isle development, and the former Emeryville police chief.

Paul will become the crime reporter for the Contra Costa Times, where he'll be reunited with my old boss, Kathy Buckley, an editor who is well-known for giving her reporters free rein when they're on a hot story. They'll make a powerful combination. The crooks in Contra Costa County won't sleep soundly tonight.

Mind you, there are still a lot of terrific reporters at the Tribune. (I could rattle off a dozen names without any effort.) But, as one glum reporter told me last week, "We've lost our franchise player."

* * *

Part of Paul's charm is that he's one of the last of the old-time newspaper types: The curmudgeon with a heart of gold.

Take the time he and his wife, Ann, got engaged. "So when's the wedding?" I asked him.

"It doesn't matter, Snapp," he growled, "because you're not invited." (Which, of course, meant I was invited.)

Or the time Bill Wong, the Trib's ombudsman, asked for a formal reply to a complaint some fat cat had made about one of Paul's stories.

"Tell him this!" Paul bellowed, thrusting up one hand in the old, familiar single-digit salute.

"I need that in writing," said Bill.

"OK, here!" said Paul. And he put his hand down on a piece of paper — single-digit salute still intact — and drew an outline around it.

ANG takes honors in East Bay contest

JUN 3 1996

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Alameda Newspaper Group won 16 awards in this year's East Bay Press Club contest, with prizes in several major categories.

Awards were given for stories published in 1995, and the contest was open to all East Bay newspapers. More than 200 entries were submitted and judged by journalists from the Peninsula Press Club.

The top award for best general news by a team went to Paul Grabowicz and Craig Staats from The Oakland Tribune for a story on Oakland's problems in fixing athletic playing fields. Judges praised the story for its investigative reporting and for pointing out in detail where the city went wrong.

Grabowicz and Staats also won the top award in the investigative reporting category for a story on Oakland city officials using cellular phones for personal purposes, including to make hair

appointments. Judges called the story an example of what investigative reporting is all about.

Alameda Times-Star reporter John Mullen took first place in sports features for a story on a Moraga man's feat of speed climbing. Mullen also won top prize for a column on Mickey Mantle's problems with alcohol, which judges called a "sweet and probing story."

Tribune reporters Harry Harris and Tyler Cunningham took second prize in the category of spot news written under deadline pressure. The story described the death of four young children in a fire set by their mother's marijuana cigarette.

Tribune photographer Mary Calvert also took second place for in the portrait category for her photo of a minister, which judges praised as beautifully composed.

Tribune photographer Ron Riesterer, won third prize in the

feature photo category for his shot of a worker popping out from a railway track. Judges said they liked the photo's humor.

Tribune reporter Mary Rajkumar took third place for best reporting on an issue. Judges called her stories on the University of California regents' vote against affirmative action "a thorough survey of an important issue."

Tribune reporter Rachele Kanigel shared third prize in the category of serious features with Tri-Valley Herald reporter Emily Bazelon.

Kanigel's story described the pain of health care workers stuck in an industry in crisis. Judges praised the story for its humanity and its use of anecdotes.

Bazelon's story explored the issue of grandparents looking after grandchildren, which judges called an increasingly common problem or blessing. Bazelon also took the top award for best gen-

eral news reporting by an individual for a story on a man with HIV charged with assaulting a woman with whom he had sex. Judges called her story the best expose yet on a very complex issue, praising its grasp of both human and legal aspects.

Tribune reporter Jonathan Schorr took third prize in the series category for his stories on the need for AIDS treatment in jails and prisons, which judges called a buried issue.

Tri-Valley Herald reporter Kimberly Winston took top prize in the same category for her series on war veterans, which judges called the best World War II series they had read. Some of her stories belong in a book, they noted.

Fremont Argus city editor Chris Forsyth won first place for his headline "Oakland poet with a view looks for a room."